

NOMINATION OF DAVID H. CHIPMAN

Mr. President, now on one final matter, the President has made an inexplicable choice in nominating David Chipman to head the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. This nominee has a long track record of open hostility to law-abiding Americans' Second Amendment rights. He is a loud, proud, would-be gun-grabber who has made it a personal mission to erode the Bill of Rights for the citizens of this country.

This is an especially awful time to be taking aim at Americans' right to keep and bear arms. Remember, as the political left has sought to vilify and defund the police across our country, homicides have, of course, surged. Last year's spike in the national murder rate was the steepest since, believe it or not, 1960.

So, as Democrats have made political war on the police, many citizens have started to think about self-protection. We have seen members of racial minority groups joining the parade of first-time gun owners in record numbers. But then Democrats don't like that either. Apparently, the left neither wants strong police forces, nor do they want Americans equipped for self-defense.

This nominee is unsuited enough for this job on policy merits, but somehow all this is just the tip of the iceberg of the concerns.

Mr. Chipman also comes with a distressing workplace reputation. Current and former ATF agents, once his colleagues, have described him as an "activist" and a "bully." Those are direct quotes. By one account, his policy views are "extreme" and his demeanor unsettling. I understand that just this week, even graver concerns have surfaced. According to one report, multiple ATF sources say there exists an internal complaint over racially insensitive comments allegedly made by the nominee in the workplace.

I don't expect that a Democratic President would pick somebody to run the ATF who will have our side of the aisle popping corks, but this is another level altogether.

Anyone who supports the Bill of Rights should oppose this nomination. There is no way this nominee is the best the Biden administration can do.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I rarely come to the floor to directly respond to speeches given by my colleagues. I normally like to use the Chamber to make my own arguments on their merits rather than to make arguments against specific colleagues.

But yesterday I listened to a speech by Senator CRUZ of Texas, and it was one of the most dangerous speeches that I have ever heard given on the Senate floor, and it deserves a response.

Now, I understand that Republicans don't want to talk about the economy. They don't want to talk about the fact that we have had more jobs added to the economy in the first 5 months of President Biden's term than any other first-term President. I know they don't want to talk about the rapid expansion of the economy that is happening.

I understand Republicans don't want to talk about what we are debating on the Senate floor right now, which is the biggest bipartisan investment in infrastructure in the history of the country.

And I also understand that the Senator from Texas doesn't like the new guidance announced this week by the CDC. And he is not alone. From what I can tell, a lot of Republicans here are upset, as are a lot of nonpolitical Americans. Nobody likes to wear a mask. Nobody likes that the new recommendation is that some Americans need to wear them. Again, I don't like wearing a mask. I hate it. My kids hate the masks more.

But here is what the CDC said. The CDC's scientists have been carefully following this dramatic increase in cases that we have seen all across the country as the Delta variant spreads, even through vaccinated people. First, we can't ignore this, the fact that there has been this huge increase in cases. The national 7-day average is triple what it was from a month ago. We are averaging 40,000 new cases a day.

This is a big problem, and it is overwhelming parts of our healthcare system. Now, I wish this weren't the case, but it requires us to think about adjusting policy.

Second, the CDC is looking at this new evidence that indicates that even fully vaccinated individuals who become infected with the Delta variant can carry the virus and transmit it to others, even if they don't get sick. Now, this latest development is important because it allows the Delta variant, the more contagious variant, to spread faster. Early information from the CDC shows that the Delta variant is as contagious as the chickenpox, more contagious than earlier strains of COVID.

And, remember, not every American today is vaccinated. For instance, my youngest son is 9 years old. He can't get vaccinated. If the evidence suggests that I can transmit the virus to him, even if my vaccine prevents me from getting really sick, then that matters.

Finally, with so many Americans still unvaccinated, the virus still has plenty of bodies in which to mutate. Right now, the good news is that we have got three authorized COVID-19 vaccines that are pretty effective against severe illness. But the worry is

that eventually the vaccine is going to mutate into a version of itself that is resistant to the current vaccines. And with so many Americans choosing to stay unvaccinated and evidence suggesting that vaccinated people who are infected with the Delta variant can transmit it to people who are unvaccinated, the CDC has concluded that, right now, we need to take additional steps to cut down on the pathways that the virus has to spread and keep mutating before it is too late, and we have a virus that our vaccines don't work against at all.

Now, what does the new guidance say? It recommends that fully vaccinated people wear a mask in public indoor settings, in places in the country where there are a lot of cases. And since most young kids aren't vaccinated, the CDC is also recommending that, when school opens, teachers and kids should wear masks.

That is the argument that the CDC is making. That is the evidence upon which they have issued their new guidance. And it is perfectly legitimate to contest the CDC's decision or the reasons that they gave for making the decision. It is OK for anybody in this body to disagree with the conclusions that they reach.

But that is not what Senator CRUZ did yesterday. He didn't come to the floor and argue against the merits of the CDC's argument. No. In fact, not once during the speech—and I watched the whole speech—did he ever reference the actual reasons for the CDC's new guidance, not once.

In fact, he claimed that the CDC offered no explanation. At one point, after mischaracterizing the CDC's announcement, he asked rhetorically why the CDC changed the guidance. "Who knows?" he said. Anyone who listened to that speech or, frankly, many other speeches that are being given by Republicans all across Capitol Hill this week would logically come to the conclusion that the CDC had offered not a single explanation for the new guidance.

Then, after creating the impression that the CDC didn't have any reasons for the new recommendation, the Senator from Texas announced that he had discovered the reason. He said that the real reason the CDC changed their guidance was because the CDC is "an arm of the Democratic National Committee" and that Democrats in Congress are "faithful little foot soldiers" of the CDC.

He offered no explanation as to why it would benefit Democrats politically or the DNC or the CDC to recommend mask wearing. He just simply claimed that the CDC was a political puppet of the DNC and the guidance was politically motivated.

The closest he came to a more detailed explanation of this claim was when he talked about the school guidance. There the Senator from Texas claimed, without any evidence, that the only reason the CDC made this decision was because it was demanded by

“union bosses” and that the “CDC said ‘Ma’am, yes, ma’am, we will issue the order demanded by the union bosses.’”

That is all made up. And the Senator from Texas isn’t the only Republican saying things like this. There are dozens of national Republicans making these same wild, unfounded allegations.

The political agenda at the CDC that Republicans allege is a fiction. It is constructed out of thin air. And it is, frankly, an insult to the thousands of dedicated, nonpolitical public health professionals at the CDC who just go to work every day trying to keep Americans safe.

These aren’t politicians. These are epidemiologists and scientists and doctors who have worked their entire lives trying to keep this country safe. I am not saying they get it right every time. I have criticized many of the decisions made by the CDC during the pandemic. It is OK to criticize their decisions, but to claim that they are all corrupt, they are these politically controlled “hacks,” that is an outrage.

And rhetoric like that is going to get people killed because we are still in the middle of the epidemic, and what anti-CDC Republicans are doing through these attacks on our public health agencies is to intentionally undermine people’s faith in the Nation’s pre-eminent public health institutions right at the moment where we need people to believe in them.

I am not saying they should be immune from criticism, but criticism should be based on the science. Contest the new evidence the CDC says that requires people to wear masks again, but saying that the scientists are deliberately ignoring the science to effectuate some top-secret political agenda—give me a break.

And, by the way, what political interest is served by recommending that people wear masks indoors again? People hate masks. There is only political downside to suggesting that people start wearing them again. It just belies plain old common sense to say that politics is behind the new guidance.

If the CDC was worried about politics, they certainly wouldn’t be recommending anybody wear masks again. And, by the way, that is all the CDC is doing: They are giving guidance. Over and over, Republicans refer to this new guidance as an “order” or, as the Senator from Texas said repeatedly, an “edict.” They know that is not true. They know that is not true.

But Republicans want to scare you into believing that the Federal Government has more power than it does. The CDC doesn’t require people to do anything; they issue recommendations. But that doesn’t suit this narrative about socialist, statist Democrats secretly pulling the strings of their marionettes at the CDC.

It is ridiculous. It is ridiculous.

Don’t come to the Senate floor and make things up. Don’t destroy people’s reputations and careers with wild, un-

substantiated allegations about political motivations. The CDC doesn’t get it right 100 percent of the time, but they don’t have some secret political agenda. But the more people believe that they do, the less likely it is that people will follow their recommendations the 90, 95 percent of the time that they do get it right, and that will guarantee that this virus never disappears.

I understand there is an element of the Republican Party that just wants to destroy all government institutions and is seeking to discredit any effort by any public agency to do good in this country. In normal times, I would argue that that is dangerous, but in the middle of a pandemic it is deadly. And Republicans of conscience should come to this floor and start telling the truth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

H.R. 3684

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, after weeks like this, I find it hard to explain to Floridians back home how Congress is actually working on behalf of their families.

I think it is safe to say that every Member of the Senate believes we should be investing in infrastructure. For me, it is pretty simple. I believe we should invest in real infrastructure: roads, bridges, airports, and seaports.

As Governor of Florida, I did just that. Over my 8 years as Governor, Florida invested \$85 billion in real infrastructure across our State, and we did it while cutting taxes and fees 100 times and paying off a third of our State debt. In other words, we paid for these big investments in infrastructure by growing our economy and supporting job creation. That is what is important to Floridians, and I am immensely proud of our accomplishments.

So I support doing the exact same thing at the Federal level. But what we are doing here just doesn’t make any sense. Nowhere in the world does business happen like it does here in the U.S. Congress.

We started this week with ongoing negotiations about a big infrastructure deal. Of course, outside of the small group involved in these negotiations, no one here had any clue what was actually being debated. We had no text; we had no real information on how much was being spent; and we certainly had no idea how this was all supposed to be paid for.

Then, on Wednesday, we got the big news: A deal had been reached. Well, that might be great, but we still had no real details. We still don’t have the text of the bill.

Now the majority leader expects us to start voting on amendments, and maybe even this whole package, this weekend. This is insanity. Nowhere in the world would this be the process. We are expected to make a decision on spending \$1.2 trillion of American taxpayer dollars, and no one in the U.S. Senate has had the chance to even read the bill.

Typically, the Congressional Budget Office would score a bill like this before the Senate considers it. That score gives us important information about the true cost and financial impact of the legislation on the Federal Government and the American people. Of course, that is not the case with this bill. The CBO hasn’t had the chance to review it at all.

Do you think any company would sign off on a massive expense without all the details? Would a family make a huge purchase without knowing exactly what it is for? Of course not. But that is how things work here in Congress, and that is not right.

This is exactly why I ran for the U.S. Senate, to make Washington work for Florida families and stop this madness of reckless spending and backroom deals that don’t deliver and aren’t paid for.

Speaking of pay-fors, well, they just don’t exist in this bill. This is how backward and awful Washington is. People up here think they can just make big, empty promises and sell it to the American people. They think families will just buy whatever they are selling, no questions asked.

Nope. It is time for some accountability. My friend from Indiana, Senator BRAUN, recently did a great job of laying out the claims and facts of the so-called pay-fors in this bill, so I am going to borrow from him a bit to show what is really going on here. Here are just a few of the most ridiculous examples.

First, half of this bill is supposedly paid for with \$550 billion from the highway trust fund. That fund is \$100 billion in the red. The money isn’t there. So that is not real.

The bill also proposes using billions of repurposed COVID relief funding. I am all for repurposing this money, but we borrowed it to begin with, so this is robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is not like it is free money.

They also want to use \$49 billion in savings for delaying a Medicare Part D rebate rule and another \$9 million paid for another year of mandatory sequester. Why would we cut Medicare to pay for roads?

The 4.6 million seniors in Florida deserve better. Any savings in the Medicare Program should stay in the Medicare Program. Let’s all remember, the Medicare trust fund is actually heading toward bankruptcy.

And, of course, there are a handful of other fee increases thrown in there with lofty and unrealistic revenue estimates that they will claim will get us fully paying for this \$1.2 trillion package.

What they won’t say is that these fees will almost certainly increase the costs of everyday goods and make it more expensive to get a mortgage and afford a home.

There is no shame in Washington; just greed. Everyone wants so badly to say that they have given you something, but they always forget to mention the cost and that you actually

have to pay for it. The cost is important.

I have said it a million times, and I will say it again: Reckless government spending causes higher inflation. It is a proven fact. And we are seeing the consequences of reckless spending across America right now.

Eighty-seven percent—eighty-seven percent—of Americans are worried about inflation. Low- and fixed-income families are having to cut back on purchases because of rising costs. I am hearing it from families across Florida who are worried.

A father of three in Jacksonville is temporarily helping take care of two other kids because their father is out of work. He has started working a second job driving Uber just to pay for groceries that are rapidly increasing in price. Now his Uber job is becoming less and less profitable because of the rising price of gas. Gas is up over 50 percent in 1 year.

A mother of four in Wauchula said that she used to be able to go to the grocery store and spend a certain amount for an entire month's groceries. Now she can't. Two hundred dollars in meat is no longer enough to feed her family of five. She has been forced to choose between gas to get to work and groceries for her family and is picking up extra jobs just to make ends meet.

I can relate to this. I grew up in a poor family. My mom would take in ironing for extra money. She would give either my older brother or me the exact change to go to the grocery store, but she said: You have to check the price of everything because things are going up in price, and if we don't have enough money, you cannot buy it.

A restaurant owner in Tampa told me that the cost of meat has gone up from \$9 a pound to \$18. Gas prices and food prices, coupled with the struggle to find workers, have been very hard on his business.

Another family in Kissimmee told me how hard it is to keep food on the table because everything is so expensive. They are having trouble keeping their car because of the cost of maintenance and gas, but if he doesn't have a car, he wouldn't have a way to get to work to take care of his family.

The price of gas affects nearly everyone. Right now, average gas prices are up nearly a dollar since last year. For a family who fills up their gas tank once a week, if they drive a car, that means Joe Biden raised their expenses \$600 a year. If they drive a truck, Joe Biden raised their expenses by \$1,000 a year.

So next time you hear a big promise, remember these stories. These are real people bearing the real cost of the Democrats' reckless spending in Washington.

Biden and the Democrats say they care about people, but they have done absolutely nothing to help families struggle to keep up with inflation. Their plan is to spend more money, not less.

We have nearly \$30 trillion in debt, and there are no plans to slow down. And that is exactly what we are seeing in this bill. We can't forget that this is just the start. CHUCK SCHUMER said it on the floor yesterday. This is just part one and leads to Biden's and the Democrats' \$5.5 trillion tax-and-spending spree on their liberal priorities. These two bills are together. They are welded together. There is no separating them.

Right now, the message that President Biden and Democrats here in Washington are sending to the American people is clear: They don't care about inflation. They don't care that their reckless spending is causing prices to skyrocket. If that is the cost of getting their liberal wish list, so be it. They aren't focused on inflation or spending, just on more government dependency and control.

Just look at what is happening this week with new COVID mask and vaccine mandates. I had COVID, and I got the vaccine. I think people should get vaccinated. But that is not what this is about. It is not about taking a measured approach and following the science and telling exactly how they came to the conclusion. It is about creating fear and chaos to grab power and control you.

I am here to say that enough is enough. It is time to wake up to reality. It is time for every fiscally responsible Member of the Senate to join me to say we don't accept the status quo. We won't watch in silence while the futures of our children and our grandchildren are mortgaged and this Nation is driven deeper in debt with reckless and wasteful spending. We won't stand by while inflation wreaks havoc on our families and businesses. We can get spending under control, but we have to start accepting responsibility, and the time to do that is now. This isn't political. It is good government, and it is common sense.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF UR MENDOZA JADDOU

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, for almost 20 years, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, known as USCIS, has been charged with defending America's status as the land of opportunity. The Agency has nearly 20,000 employees. They operate in 220 offices around the world, where they provide assistance to immigrants seeking a new life in America and help protect America from any foreign threats.

But after 4 years of neglect and mismanagement under the Trump administration, USCIS is in dire need of leadership. Today, the Senate has an opportunity to provide that Agency with that leadership by confirming Ur Jaddou as USCIS Director. Ms. Jaddou may be the most qualified person ever to be nominated for this job. She has nearly 20 years of experience in immigration law, policy, and administration. She is the daughter of immigrants from Mexico and Iraq. She personally

understands the importance of ensuring our Nation's immigration system is both accessible and safe. And if confirmed, Ms. Jaddou would make history as the very first woman to lead USCIS.

Let me tell you a little bit about her background. Ms. Jaddou began her career working on immigration policy and oversight for 9 years in the House of Representatives. She worked for my friend and former colleague ZOE LOFGREN of California, who is the authoritative voice on immigration in the House of Representatives.

Following that role, Ms. Jaddou served as a senior official in the State Department and then as Chief Counsel at USCIS. As the Agency's highest ranking legal officer, Ms. Jaddou not only sharpened her mastery of immigration law, she also gained valuable experience navigating USCIS's administrative complexities and operations. As Chief Counsel at this Agency, she managed more than 220 attorneys who support the work of tens of thousands of USCIS employees who are located in offices around the world.

Ms. Jaddou's extensive background is exactly what we need at this moment.

As I mentioned, the Trump administration led a deliberate effort to undermine this Agency's work. You remember—anything relating to immigration, the Trump administration tried to create a problem. For instance, when the former President took office, USCIS had approximately \$800 million in cash reserves. Not bad. Four years later, those cash reserves had been virtually depleted, putting thousands of Federal employees at the Agency at risk of being furloughed in the middle of a pandemic.

These Federal employees deserve leadership that advocates for their interests and supports their work. Ms. Jaddou is that person. In fact, the union that represents over 13,000 USCIS employees published a letter in support of her nomination, writing: "Ms. Jaddou is well-acquainted with the significant financial and operational challenges facing the Agency."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce sent a letter in support of her nomination as well. They wrote: "Ms. Jaddou's knowledge and experience would be indispensable in providing the critical leadership needed to stabilize the agency."

Leaders inside government and outside government recognize that Ms. Jaddou is the legal expert our Nation needs to take the reins of this vital Agency.

Given the urgent need for Senate-confirmed leadership to address the critical issues they face, as well as Ms. Jaddou's eminent qualifications for that position, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her nomination.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Mr. President, I would like to say a word in response to the speech just given by the Senator from Florida, the junior Senator from Florida.